

SELFIDGE FIELD, BUILDING NO. 509
(Antoine Peltier House)
(Old Farm House)
Sugarbush Road east of N. Perimeter Road
Mt. Clemens vicinity
Macomb County
Michigan

HAER No. MI-116-A

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
Great Lakes Systems Office
Department of the Interior
1709 Jackson Street
Omaha, NE 68102-2571

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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

SELFRIDGE FIELD, BUILDING No. 509

HAER No. MI-116-A

(Antoine Peltier House)

(Old Farm House)

Location:

West Perimeter Road north of Northwest Gate
Selfridge Air National Guard Base

U.S.G.S. Mount Clemens East Quadrangle, Universal Transverse
Mercator Coordinates: 17.348310.4719280

Significance:

The oldest surviving building on the base, a late nineteenth century vernacular brick farm residence acquired by the government in 1943, this house represents the landscape of rural farm homes that existed prior to the base expansion during World War II.

Description:

Building #509 is a compound massed plan building presenting an irregular rectangular footprint 31 feet 6 inches maximum width by a maximum 60 feet deep, containing 2,665 square feet. The two story brick house rests on an ashlar cut stone foundation and is shielded by a cross-gabled asphalt shingle roof. The interior walls on the first story are also constructed of brick. The facade presents four bays composed of a central, two bay, front gabled unit flanked by a cross gabled entry porch on the west and a hipped projecting bay on the east. The central facade bay displays centrally positioned paired sash windows on both the first and second stories. All door and window openings display projecting brick hood molds and plain masonry sills. Surviving windows contain two-over-two lighted wood sash. The entrance porch, recessed in an ell to the west, is shielded by a shed roof stoop, while the hipped bay forming the western facade is pierced by a single fixed pane window.

The west elevation is defined by an irregular roof line composed of a two story central gable front unit, a two story cross gabled unit north to the facade and a single story cross gabled dependency to the south. The piercing pattern of the central two story bays are identical to that of the facade with centrally positioned paired windows on each story, while the rear dependency presents four bays defined by a pedestrian entry flanked by a single window to the north and two windows to the south. The rear elevation consists of three bays defined by a corner pedestrian entry and two sash windows set within the gable. The east elevation is identical to the west.

Under the gable front unit extending back from the facade, the first story porch enters a 6 by 6 foot vestibule that opens into a 12 by 13 foot living room that leads to a stair hall on the west. South of the living room is 14 by 15 foot parlor that leads east into a 9 by 14 foot sun porch and east to two small rooms, each 7 by 9 feet. South of the parlor the rear single story unit plan is composed of a 14 by 17 foot dining room that lead west into a 10 by 11 foot pantry and stair hall and south into the 13 by 15 foot kitchen. The second floor plan, composed primarily of four bedrooms, reveals that the front gabled bays form a 24 by 28 foot room, leading to the south to the cross gabled section that contains a 14 by 14 room, an 8 by 14 foot room, and stair hall, while the rear ell consists of 11 by 13 foot room and closets. Surviving baseboards are 10 inches in height and are unadorned except for a concave trim strip at the wall juncture. Interior walls are all plaster except for plain shiplap wainscoting in the dining room, while surviving interior doors are all wood five-panel, and the house employed hot water radiator heat.

The interior is in very poor condition and several rooms are filled with storage and abandoned materials. The basement was not accessible because it is completely filled with water to near the first floor joists, but the heating system is hot water heat and employed radiators. Trim has been removed from some rooms but that which remains is typical stock trim available through mill catalogues in the late nineteenth century. Surviving interior doors are simple five-paneled solid pine.

History:

The house was built ca. 1870 by Antoine Peltier, and occupied a 45 acre tract of land by 1875.¹ By 1895 the house was owned by Antoine's wife, Elizabeth Peltier, and the farm had expanded to 111 acres.² The farmhouse and 2.97 acres passed to

¹ Stewart, D.J., Combination Atlas Map of Macomb County, Michigan. D.J. Stewart Company, Philadelphia, 1875.

² Ogle, George A., Standard Atlas of Macomb County, Michigan. George A. Ogle Company, Chicago, 1895.

daughter Gertrude Peltier Brandner, who sold the land to Charles Gatecliff and Ralph Gray in 1937, and they, in turn, sold the property to the U.S. Government when the base expanded in November, 1942.³ The building was used for a variety of functions, including base officers' housing for the Army Air Corps and Air Force. After the Navy assumed control in the early 1970s the house was used for offices, storage, and most recently as a "haunted House" for Halloween parties. The house was renovated as recently as 1974 when insulation was installed, and was transferred to the Navy for use as an administrative building in 1982⁴. It is now windowless and open to the elements and vandals, and the basement is flooded.

Sources: Anonymous, Brief History of Selfridge Air Force Base, 1917-1960, unpublished ms., Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, 1960.

Geil, Harvey and Selard, Map of the Counties of Macomb and St. Clair, Michigan, Syracuse, New York, 1859.

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Mihalak, Joseph, Evolution of Family Housing Selfridge Air National Guard Base Mount Clemens, Michigan. Historical Office, U.S. Army Tank-Automotive Command, 20, January, 1988.

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Selfridge Field News, "Expansion to Make Selfridge Large Air Base," 13 August, 1942.

³ Thomason and Associates, Intensive Survey of Historic Properties Naval Air Facility Detroit, Thomason and Associates, Nashville, Tennessee, October, 1994. Report on file, SHPO, Lansing.

⁴Original plans on file, Selfridge Base Civil Engineers Office

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Historian:

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